4. Prolegomena to an Aesthetic of Thought

Out there, beneath the gleaming vault, men say to one another: "Man, be yourself!" In here, among the goblins, it is said: "Goblin, suffice unto yourself!"

— Peer Gynt, Ibsen

Discussing aesthetics is no easy task. Any reflection on beauty, whether from a normative or descriptive perspective, entails establishing criteria to determine whether a specific entity conforms to them. Though it may seem intriguing at first, dwelling on the debate between relativism and absolutism belongs to the past. The positions in that old trench war have long been established and ideally remain in balance: either there are absolute criteria for evaluating beauty, or those criteria inevitably depend on the historical, cultural, social, economic, and even psychological conditioning of a given viewpoint, which serves as the reference.

The problem is resolved by understanding the absolutization of criteria relative to communities—namely, the existence of intersubjects.

Either beauty is absolute and independent of any context, or it is relative to a given context. These are the extreme positions in the epistemological debate on aesthetics. To some, beauty shares the nature of an adverb: there, thus, here—merely a situational indication. To others, believing in absolute criteria would entitle us to steamroll through different eras and cultures with the unscrupulous force of opinion, dismissing discrepancies as bad taste and concordances as excellence. Our values would inevitably appear absolute to us. At the opposite extreme, we might feel inclined to accept as beauty even that which we find unpleasant or repulsive.

Prisoners of aesthetic relativism, the fleeting structures of judgment would ultimately dissolve. The same applies to criteria of justice and charity. It may seem trivial, merely an intellectual curiosity, but a quick glance at certain historical episodes—take your pick—would suffice to grasp the gravity of the issue.

How can we judge circumstances so different from our own using criteria as dissimilar as ours?

What we must already admit as truth and a stable point of support for the design of new ideas about beauty is that there are no neutral viewpoints, and the analyst is always implicated in their analysis. Within an assumed perspective and with certain accepted requirements, the analyst would, of course, wish to hold the absolute; to be God. Then, with modesty, they might acknowledge that the stereotype of their sensitivity to beauty has been implanted ("implanted by an impersonal human malice that harasses and perverts us and is discursively indispensable") and that they possess no neutrality when analyzing. But, in their inner self, safe from all critical judgment, they will persist in associating the relative beauty of their values with the ineffable absolute of transcendent beauty.

I would now like to propose three examples of beautiful thought to outline a scale of fundamental and foundational aesthetic values for an aesthetics of thought. Not with the intention of truly "founding"

an aesthetic, but to explain how thought can be beautiful or ugly, and how certain rules could be derived, inspired by the confrontation of cases, showing useful regularities.

It should be clear from the outset that the epistemological base of my analysis is the "Theory of the Intersubject" (F. Marichal - C. Tellechea, 2005), and therefore, each statement regarding existence itself is nothing more than a "demand for joint attribution" to be accepted or rejected by the viewer. For more details on this issue, you can refer to the first reading of this series, titled "Proposal for an Architecture of the Subject Founded on the Concept of 'Attribution,'" published on YouTube on April 5, 2025.

Order is beautiful, and there is a reason for this. As I mentioned in the previous article, order is control. When we are able to establish order, something magical happens; we can understand, and to understand is to create a coherent image of the world within us, in a place that is us. While we make the world coherent, we also make our understanding of the world coherent, our imago mundi. Finally, we give birth to ourselves as coherencies, as orders; "we give ourselves birth" in the double sense of the expression.

Order is the Apollonian principle Nietzsche spoke of in The Birth of Tragedy, and it could be expected that both the Apollonian and the Dionysian are, in their own way, beautiful. Note that I am being cautious, as I attempt to avoid certain childish counterarguments. When referring to the beauty of control and not to that of the loss of control, I am leaning towards the Apollonian and setting aside the Dionysian. It is certain that, moreover, the only truly human impulse is towards order, and all else is merely animal reminiscence.

Thought that is orderly is beautiful. It shines like precious metal amidst the foul mud of useless references, egocentric ramblings, and erratic conjectures. It asserts itself because we feel that behind it there is an ultimate, axiomatic truth. It is a formal pleasure—white, geometric, smooth—to see and experience it.

Academic conventions, for example, tarnish thought to the extent that they require it to establish links with previous thought and do not favor intelligence as creativity. As I pointed out in the first lecture of this cycle, it is important to understand that each quoted fragment of text originating from an external source brings theory into the new analysis. If I sketch a connection between my development and the concept of the "psychic apparatus" as proposed by Sigmund Freud, for example, I am tacitly validating psychoanalysis (which constitutes the worst way to validate it, because it may be involuntary and necessarily entails a loss of control, a disorder). Imagine how much undifferentiated traffic, how much smuggling of thought can disfigure a theoretical discourse without the author even noticing. I believe that what happens in the backstage of thought in these cases is very ugly and clumsy, and I am also convinced that the citation mechanism, revered in academia, is primarily a way to ensure a certain slowness in the development of new thought, and the academic realm feeds on all its undesirable consequences. This is because it is not just the slowness for slowness's sake, but it also serves as a life

insurance for the hierarchical structure that governs institutions, which are nothing more than a web of political relations based on rewards and exemplary punishments.

And speaking of the political, attention should also be paid to beauty as a connection between thought and reality. By this, I mean that, when addressing the issue from the perspective of ugliness, a single way of thinking, which structures the imago mundi, the propiosfera (the world-image we have within us), is capable of making all thought ugly – truly ugly – by repeating itself time and again as the dominant matrix. It is like those rotten apples that spoil the others in the box. For example, the demands for respect and claims of groups. It is clear that this operativity, this "revolutionary", revulsive, destabilizing character of thought, could be seen as a manifestation of beauty, but in the end, it is merely a tautological and temporal game: "I want to see what I want to see and will only accept that which confirms what I want to see to fulfill desires less pious than pursuing truth". My analysis boils down to the idea that women have been oppressed throughout history by men, bad men. My analysis, among tens, hundreds, and thousands of analyses that promote the same idea. The theme and infinite variations. It is the same analysis again and again, and the ugliness of the lack of creativity assaults us once more. It seems evident to me that this is connected to the issue of attention. Many people feed off the attention of others; the scandal or the strength of the group grants them power. To these, it is enough to remember the words of the Virgil character in Dante: "guard and pass".

I find it necessary to pause at the phrase "pursue the truth". In a framework that denies truth as an imposition on the subject and interprets it as the action of the subject, it seems contradictory. The Theory of the Intersubject, the framework that Marichal and I developed, does not deny truth, but rather describes it as the strict and irrefutable result of the intersubjective relationship. It is not enough to convince ourselves of something for it to be true, but it is necessary to convince ourselves of something for it to be true. The crucial point of reasoning is that we will not claim to believe in something when we do not believe in it. And it is radically true that the intersubjects who make up our reality and truth indistinguishably sustain both. The assertion of the will to "pursue the truth" remains valid with this epistemological base, since the subject must give way to endorse fields when they have sufficient evidence to do so. If they did not, they would be refusing to occupy their place in a fundamental mechanism. The central problem is ideology, which is nothing more than disguised fanaticism and, ultimately, self-interested lying.

The problem of the operativity of thought is beautiful in itself. The mind is capable of astonishing feats. By "operativity", I mean that a criterion of beauty in relation to thought could be defined by its ability to bring about changes in the realm of reality. It is possible to corroborate that operativity, the thought/reality link, within the matrix of Darwinian influence and Marxist influence, among others. Now, there is beauty in independent thought, that thought that seeks independence from reality and demands to be valued on its own. Something very terrible often happens with such thought: it is used as a password, metamorphoses into a "jargon" that gives cohesion and strength to groups. But this,

strictly speaking, happens with all thought, because the misery does not lie in the thought but in the human being. In the human being and... their thought.

I said the mind is capable of amazing things because the problem, isolated, like a frightened animal in a cage, is beautiful in itself. This means having a meta perspective, a detached gaze on the theories and models of thought with which we structure reality. It implies taking our eye off the mind to observe our mind from the outside. And this may be harder than one thinks when one has placed all hopes in a model full of determinations. Later, it will be hard to maintain that meta gaze on it.

As we say in Uruguay: "we think with the shirt on".

I admire the sublime beauty of clear limits and Euclidean geometry in the use of reason, but I also recognize the beauty of thought that is capable of battling with reality and shaping it. The problem is that both possibilities are always on the edge of the abyss, in conflict, in a precarious balance with the ugliness of fanaticism. It is very easy to get trapped within the narrow confines of a scheme or to turn thought into prostitution due to base and unconfessable needs.

The poetic intersection is another idea I have always considered beautiful. I will allow myself, taking the epistemological risks I have already warned about, to cite three authors: Friedrich Nietzsche, José Ortega y Gasset, and Cesare Pavese, in strict chronological order.

With all the limitations imposed by translation into our language, we find examples of overwhelming beauty in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*:

> But then something happened that silenced all mouths and paralyzed all eyes. Meanwhile, indeed, the tightrope walker had begun his work: he had come out through a small door and was walking along the rope stretched between two towers, which in this way hung over the market and the crowd. When he was exactly halfway across, the small door opened again, and a companion, dressed in many colors like a jester, jumped out and quickly followed the previous one. "Go on, you numb-footed one!" his terrible voice shouted, "Go on, lazy one, impostor, pale face! Let me tickle you with my heel! What are you doing here between two towers? The tower is your place; they should lock you up there, you're blocking the way for someone better than you!" And with every word, he drew closer and closer; but when he was just one step behind him, something horrible happened that made all mouths go silent and all eyes freeze: he let out a scream like a demon and jumped over the one in his way. But when the other saw his rival coming for him, he lost his head and the rope; he threw the balancing pole away and, faster than it, fell, spiraling down like a whirlwind of arms and legs. The market and the crowd were like the sea when a storm approaches: they all flew off in complete disarray, one on top of the other, especially where the body had to fall.
>
> But Zarathustra stood still, and very close to him, the body fell, battered and broken, though not yet dead. Soon after, the man who had fallen, shattered, regained consciousness and saw Zarathustra kneeling beside him. "What are you doing here?" he finally said. "I’ve known for a long time that the devil would trip me up. Now he’s dragging me to hell: are you trying to stop it?"
>
> "By my honor, friend", said Zarathustra, "none of what you speak of exists: there is no devil or hell. Your soul will be dead even before your body: so don’t be afraid!"

Nietzsche, 2022 (1895), 146

The allegory of the tightrope walker's death suggests the ideas of decadence and transcendence, along with the exultant life impulse that, according to Nietzsche's hopes, will bring an end to the weak man who is cast into life with no other purpose than to hinder, slow down, or prevent the emergence of the Übermensch. The analogy projects us onto a poetic plane where the initial image—the two tightrope walkers walking on the same rope—becomes truly insignificant.

To avoid intellectual clichés and save ourselves from vulgarity, let us quickly escape from mere admiration for the poetic. Let's leave that to literature professors. Instead, let's delve into the profound idea and essential nature of the beauty we witness through a series of simple questions. These questions will allow us to develop a map of a transcendent reality, a number eclipsed by a simplistic understanding of the analogy.

Why are the characters two tightrope walkers? Why does the second one look like a jester? Why are there two towers and not two ropes? What might the marketplace and the crowd metaphorically signify? Why does the second tightrope walker jump over the first? What do the contrasting attitudes of both mean? Why, according to Zaratustra, would the first tightrope walker's soul die before his body?

Knowing the concept of Nietzschean Übermensch makes it easy to assign representativeness to the second tightrope walker; he is will and strength. Ironically, he is a jester, someone who, hidden behind his appearance and his place in an imaginary court (he is there to make people laugh), speaks uncomfortable truths. While the first one resigns himself, the second acts—and he does so without mercy. Starting from this second association—tightrope walker/Übermensch—it is easy to continue establishing allegorical roles. Humans are like tightrope walkers since we must maintain a precarious state (the balance), full of challenges, throughout our lives. This desire for balance is nothing more than a metaphor for the fragility of our existence. The towers that mark the entrance and exit of the rope are, evidently—"evidently", if we continue with the analogy as we have established it, using the concept of the Übermensch as its core—the birth and death. The second tightrope walker tells the first, pointing out the first's belonging to the tower (non-existence), that in truth, it would have been better if he had never been born (remember: "Christianity was, from its origin, essentially and fundamentally disgust and revulsion against life" and also the answer of the sly satyr Silenus to King Midas). Thus, the strong and determined man of the Nietzschean model (and ruthless, lacking Christian values such as charity and mercy) is hindered by the other model of humanity. The jump is the overcoming of the man who is dead while alive; it is, in truth, life itself manifesting as a blind, natural, and above all, amoral force. The death in life explains Zaratustra's words regarding the soul of the fallen tightrope walker. The market and its people constitute a third level of humanity, which can only contemplate the drama while living a grotesque and vile existence. It is the backdrop of vulgarity: the mass, which moves involuntarily, passively, like the sea carried by the storm.

It is also remarkable how the author makes the passage of life, temporal, a visible element in the movement of the tightrope walkers on the rope. The prefix “super” as “overcoming” is literally embodied through the second acrobat’s jump (“He let out a scream like a demon and jumped over the one who was in his way”).

I could well be reproached that Nietzsche is anything but an example of an “ordered thinker”, and in this sense, following my own ideas, I might ask myself what happens when a thought is disordered but possesses this supposed “poetic beauty” that I’m highlighting. And the answer to all this is simple: we must be a step beyond nonsense. We must overcome that corrosive childhood that blocks our future. It is clear that these reference values cannot and should not be applied rigorously to classify, in a positivist manner, thoughts as beautiful or ugly. It is simply about general traits identified in the beautiful that, according to my analysis, are undoubtedly absent in the ugly. An analysis in which I am not only an active force but also the origin of its pieces. In short: a beautiful thought can be beautiful because of its analogical richness and not because of its order; and also vice versa.

It is at this point that we ourselves must take the leap beyond the previous man, who is also the previous mode of thinking. That previous mode of thinking is the one that understands analogy as the relationship of inherent similarity between two parts. We must change at least two things in that traditional definition; first, analogy is not a relationship of inherent similarity but attributed (which alters the epistemological foundation on which the concept itself is based). The second thing to revise is whether, in an analogy, only two parts are involved. Right off the bat, we know that this is not true. In the analogy relationship, countless objects can participate. But if we focus on the minimal expression of the analogy, we must face the reality of the analogous pair, that is, the one that presents two analogous objects that we simply call “analogous”. In the minimal analogy (with two analogues), we find a third element allowed by the reversibility of the relationship: the analogema. So, if A possesses the property “x”, the property “y”, and the property “z”, and object B possesses the property “w”, the property “x”, and the property “z”, then the intersection of both sets in properties “x” and “z” can be considered a separate object; it can be “identified”. This opens up possibilities for a third order. The first, in the Nietzschean allegory of the tightrope walkers, is the order of the tightrope walkers themselves; the second order is the irruption of the Übermensch and the overcoming of the morally restricted man. But in a third order, a singular abstract device appears, a series of perfectly identifiable relations, abstracted and abstract, whose formalization reveals a superior and different state of reality. Something that Plato could only dream of.

Overcoming, agitation, vulnerability, cruelty, blindness, pathos, and passivity seamlessly integrate into the abstract construction within the imaginary background—a landscape opened to our view by the concept of the "analogema". And it is not insignificant, in assessing this concept, to intuit that analogemas can be designed even while disregarding other orders.

Although I know I risk building castles in the air and turning this reading into just another self-indulgent rambling, I am fully convinced of certain things, namely: analogemas exist, they can be described, they

constitute a higher plane of reality, and we need new languages to encode them (both verbal and visual); they are also an opportunity to rid ourselves of ideological noise and to forge a new dimension of reason—one that propels humanity toward a new form of mental and spiritual existence. And at the same time, I must express my anxiety over the fact that we have yet to explore, in depth and with full awareness, the immense potential of imagination as a virtual space for the collective representation of abstract entities.

> The metaphor is probably the most fertile power that humans possess. Its effectiveness reaches the confines of thaumaturgy and seems like a tool of creation that God forgot inside one of His creatures when forming it, just as a distracted surgeon might leave an instrument in the abdomen of the patient.
>
> All other powers keep us bound within what is real, what already exists. The most we can do is add or subtract things from one another. Only the metaphor allows us to escape and creates, among real things, imaginary reefs, a blossoming of weightless islands.

The Spanish philosopher highlights the power of the metaphor in this passage. He doesn't just underline its power of substituting one idea for another but associates it with the very construction of the world according to an abstract theology. It would be a divine tool and at the same time a human power. It would have a magical character, capable of projecting imagination and intellect to "reefs" and "weightless islands". The whole passage is imbued with metaphors, and therefore, recursively, the same thing happens in Ortega y Gasset's discourse as he is referring to through it. That is, we are projected into those reefs and those weightless islands.

How can we ignore the beauty of the weight assigned to the entity "God" by portraying Him as a distracted surgeon, making mistakes like any other being in the world who isn't God!

The second paragraph, which explains the difference between the metaphor and other powers held by man, presents the power of "escape" that the metaphor grants to human intelligence through its operativity (a beautiful concept I've already used in this very reading). The operativity of the metaphorical power would project human intelligence to another level of reality; an idea, before I'm reminded, that was extensively explored by various schools and poetic movements (romanticism, symbolism, futurism, ultraism, creacionism…), but which here reaches an importance that goes beyond the expressive power of art and permeates thought, creating a fundamental indifference between artistic imagination and philosophical imagination.

But stepping away from expressive formalities and focusing on the ideas, those "imaginary reefs", those "weightless islands" are nothing more than the possibilities of shifting levels of reality. In other words, in essence, these imaginary elements represent characteristics of a realm where reality unfolds into an alternative dimension of existence that arises from the concrete but, at the same time, transcends it.

It's not new, then, to conceptualize reality through abstract entities and structures. What is truly fascinating, beautiful even, is to make those realities a world in themselves, which can then interact with ours to predict it.

*

From the Italian writer Cesare Pavese in *The Business of Living* (1952), page 142, we owe this little gem of reason:

> Literature is a defense against the offenses of life. It says to it, "You don't fool me: I know how you behave, I follow you and predict you, I like watching you act and I steal your secret by composing [containing, complicating] you in clever constructions that stop your flow.

Let's hold our breath for a moment and set aside the fact that he suggests the other great defense against the offenses of life is self-imposed silence, with all the connotations that idea carries coming from Pavese. Connotations that certainly possess a certain kind of beauty. Let's not say, for the sake of brevity, that the lines following the quoted fragment are an apology for the self-imposition of silence through a bullet. Let's focus instead on the peculiarity proposed by a dialogue between literature and life. Quickly, let's understand—and this will save us time—that in this case, "literature" is synonymous with "art".

But I would like to draw attention to the fact that the "self-imposition of silence" itself, coming from Pavese, trades information behind the analyst's back if he doesn't know the tragic end of the writer. And it's undoubtedly an analogous phenomenon to the trafficking of epistemological foundations: the meanings for the verbs "to be", "to exist", and for the nouns "truth" and "reality", move metaphorically, fluctuating according to that foundation.

The relationship between art and life, framed as an accusation of cruelty, carries at least two elements with interesting properties. I say "at least two" because it's a bit more complex. Life is cruelty, and literature is accusation and defense through wit. In this context, through prosopopeia or personification, we witness an impossible dialogue that nevertheless takes form. Life offends, and literature defends by creating constructs that halt, paralyze the eternal passage of life, of time.

I made the identity association literature/art, but I will now directly substitute "literature/art" with "reason", and we will see, upon rereading the fragment from Pavese, the profound blue and beautiful depths the quote reaches.

I spoke about the construction of the analogem as a result of the reversibility of relationships. But isn't capturing the complexity of existence, of life, the design and operation of analogems? Isn't it, in fact, to abandon the appearance imposed by reality with its multiple facets, to approach another reality, free of unheard delays and miserable hiding places?

"You don't fool me – says the creative reason to life – I know how you behave, I follow you and foresee you, I like to see you act and steal your secret by composing [containing, complicating] yourself in thoughtful [ingenious] constructions that stop your flow". And now we have the concept of "behavior of reality" as "deception", the "stealing of secrets", the "ingenious constructions" that temporarily stop the flow of life. Flow, which is nothing but a vulgar and necessarily surmountable reminder of the inevitable arrival of death.

I also find this small distortion of the Pavese Diary fragment fitting, as it emphasizes the concept of "anticipation", since the construct would not only be outside the reach of time and its whims, but also beyond cultural, contextual, and historical influences. Even better, it would position itself in such a way that it could predict the future, explain the present, and the past. Such would be the power of this tool. And who could deny that the predictive capacity is a form of beauty in thought?

Finally, I would like to talk about harmony. In thought, as in music, harmony is concord, order, intention achieved through the right tools. In other words, in thought, harmony is coherence. The only contender for the throne would be concordance with truth, but we already know that few pieces of knowledge can be considered non-anthropogenically true; that is, valid for all species everywhere. And this problem confronts us with the precariousness of our rational constructions. It's not the fault of this or that knowledge, of this or that thinker, it's the defect in knowledge as the human being can elaborate it that corrodes those constructions. And until we face our destiny as a species and understand that it is through reason that we will survive – disinterested reason, based on a commitment as a species – we will continue to fall into misery.

If coherence is beautiful, and concordance with truth (however unstable we may agree the truth is) at least generates the illusion of stability—which also provides us with an undeniable sense of well-being—we must consider individual, personal disinterest as another virtue of thought. Indeed, we are all destined to die, and we would all like our name to be remembered, but we should also appreciate the beauty of making a contribution to our fellow beings, even if it is behind anonymity, and also the beauty of being nothing more than a sigh in the vast existence of a universe indifferent to our passions.

Bibliography

Adorno, T. (2004). Aesthetic Theory. Akal. Translated by Jorge Navarro Pérez.

Nietzsche, F. (2022). Thus Spoke Zarathustra. Cátedra. Translated by Luis A. Acosta.

Nietzsche, F. (2020). The Birth of Tragedy. Gradifco. Translated by Alicia Varela.

Ortega y Gasset, J. (1970). The Dehumanization of Art. Revista de Occidente.

Pavese, C. (2022). The Art of Living. Seix Barral. Translated by Ángel Crespo.